

Sally's Top Ten Lists For Literacy Leaders*

Navigating the Waters Of A Reading Initiative

***Ten out of many more possible contenders**

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The Top Ten Reasons There Are Struggling Readers

1. Reading is very complicated and evolutionarily speaking, it is new to the brain. Some brains are "better wired" for written language than others. It has nothing to do with what we call intelligence.
2. Schools are very complicated host environments with complicated schedules, rules, and people.
3. Families and backgrounds and children are very complicated....and varied.
4. There are several reading levels in any grade and each struggling reader has different reasons for his or her struggles.
5. The preparation that schools of education often provide for educators is incomplete when it comes to reading instruction.
6. Change is hard. Fads have come and gone. Scientifically Based Reading Instruction has not always been used with fidelity, intensity, and for the needed duration for particular students.
7. There is a significant shortage of specific professional development.
8. Often typical assessment has not been specific enough and formative in nature. Research based assessments have not always driven instruction.
9. There is often a lack of consistency from one teacher to another and/or one grade to another with regard to curriculum and behavior management.
10. Title 1, General Ed and Special Ed often find it difficult to work together so that a given child has consistent interventions and resources are shared.

By Sally Grimes

The Top Ten "To Do's" When Starting a Reading Initiative

1. Gather key administrators from Title 1, General Ed, and Special Ed with teacher~leaders to discuss what the present situation is with regard to reading, after providing them with critical background information about recent findings about reading and provide models.
2. Do a "needs assessment" and survey of the staff. (These are available on the attached websites.) Which desired assessments, programs, materials, and expertise are presently available? Which are needed?

3. Involve the parents and community organizations. Develop a three-year plan with them.
4. Think of the challenge as "collective responsibility" asking how are "all of us" are going to teach 95% of "our students" to read. (We do know how to teach all but 2-5% of people to read successfully.) **Decide who will lead the effort, since informed leadership is critical.**
5. Get consensus. Help everyone to understand why a reading initiative is needed and why it is possible. Establish a "Literacy Team" that is building based and can address four important areas: assessment, curriculum, professional development, and infrastructure over time.
6. The Three Tier Reading Model and the Response to Intervention Model provide frameworks for adjusting school schedules so that true assessment driven instruction can be implemented and time for monthly data meetings, grade level meetings, progress monitoring, etc. can be scheduled. Scheduling is one of the hardest "pieces" ; it is essential that it be done carefully.
7. Simultaneously, begin the planned professional development that is ongoing and based on Scientifically Based Reading Research. Provide tailored professional development for paraprofessionals, administrators, teachers and teacher/leaders.
8. Establish an assessment team to begin using the chosen assessments and gradually have others "shadow" these team members so that training "rolls out". Decide who will coordinate the data gathering and assessment.
9. Reallocate resources, both human and financial. Investigate the need for both Reading Coaches and Reading Specialists and adjust roles accordingly.
10. Decide the scope and reach of the initiative and write a plan. Some leaders start with K and then gradually roll it out to other grades. Some start with assessment, etc. "Too much, too fast, won't last." (Vicki Gibson).

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The Top Ten Ways That Sailing A Super Tanker Is Like Running a Reading Initiative

1. The Captain sets the course and takes charge and says, "This is where the ship is going", and it must go in the right direction.
2. The Captain, the other officers, and the crew are a team. Each needs the other and has to trust the other. Each is essential and has to do a certain job in a certain way at a certain time. They usually have to "answer" to a funding source (the company).

3. There are regulations and certifications that the officers and crew must have. Continual training and skill building are expected.
4. Without charts, radar, and a compass the ship could founder.
5. The ship must be properly equipped and routinely upgraded.
6. Experienced navigators and engineers are essential even though each feels more important than the other. The truth is, they both are equally important.
7. There will be rough seas, storms, rocks and challenging traffic.
8. Often, the course gets altered due to bad weather.
9. At times, there are breakdowns and the equipment has to be "jury rigged".
10. The captain has to know where and when to call for help and send an S.O. S. in time to save the ship.

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The Top Ten Glossary Terms for Literacy Leaders

Advanced Phonics – Strategies for decoding multi-syllabic words that include morphology and information about the meaning, pronunciation, and parts of speech of words gained from the knowledge of prefixes, roots, and suffixes

Automaticity – Reading without conscious effort or attention to decoding. Automaticity is relevant at the word level and leads to Fluency that occurs mainly at the sentence level.

Comprehension Strategies:

Before Reading – Strategies employed to emphasize the importance of preparing students to read text (e.g., activate prior knowledge, set a purpose for reading)

During Reading - Strategies that help a student engage the meanings of a text (e.g., asking questions at critical junctures; modeling the thought process used to make inferences; construction mental imagery).

After Reading – Strategies that require the reading to actively transform key information in text that has been read (e.g., summarizing, retelling).

Chunked Text - Continuous text that has been separated into meaningful phrases often with the use of single and double slash marks (/ and //). The intent of using chunked text or chunking text is to give children an opportunity to practice reading phrases fluently. There is no absolute in chunking text, thus teachers should use their judgment.

Coaching – A professional development process of supporting teachers in implementing new classroom practices by providing new content and information, modeling related teaching strategies, and offering on-going feedback as teachers master new practices.

Decodable Text – Text in which a high proportion of words (80-90%) comprise sound-symbol relationships that have already been taught. It is used for the purpose of providing practice with specific decoding skills and serves as a bridge between learning phonics and the application of phonics in independent reading.

Empirical Research – Refers to scientifically based research that applies rigorous systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge. This includes research that employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment; has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective and scientific review; involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn; relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations and can be generalized.

Explicit Instruction - Involves direct explanation. The teacher's language is concise, specific, and related to the objective. Another characteristic of explicit instruction is a visible instructional approach which includes a high level of teacher/student interaction and usually, multi-sensory scaffolding materials. Explicit instruction means that the actions of the teacher are clear, unambiguous, direct, and visible. This makes it clear what the students are to do and learn. Nothing is left to guess work.

Reading Programs:

Core Reading Program (CRP) – The initial instructional tool teachers use to teach children to learn to read including instruction in the five components of reading identified by the National Reading Panel (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension), spelling, and writing to ensure that they reach reading levels that meet or exceed grade-level standards. A CRP should address the instructional needs of the majority of students in a respective school or district.

Supplementary Reading Program or Instruction – That which goes beyond the instruction provided by the core program because the core program does not provide enough instruction or practice in a key area to meet the needs of the students in a particular classroom or school. For example, teachers in a school may observe that their core program does not provide enough instruction in vocabulary or phonemic awareness to adequately meet the needs of the majority of their students.

Intervention Reading Program (IRP) - Intended for students who are reading one or more years below grade level, and who are struggling with a broad range of reading skills. They include instructional content based on the five essential components of reading instruction with explicit strategies, coordinated instructional sequences, ample practice opportunities and aligned student materials. They are more intensive, explicit, systematic, and more motivating than the instructional students have previously received, but are aligned with them and re-introduce the skills or knowledge.

Scaffolding – Refers to the support that is given to students in order for them to arrive at the correct answer. This support may occur as immediate, specific feedback that a teacher offers during student practice. For instance, it may include giving encouragement or cues, breaking the problem down into smaller steps, using a graphic organizer, or providing an example. Scaffolding may be embedded in the features of the instructional design such as starting with simpler skills and building progressively to more difficult skills.

The Top Ten Websites for Literacy Leaders

www.colorincolorado.org (ELL)

www.adlit.org (MS/HS)

www.corelearn.com (Consortium on Reading Excellence)

www.readingrockets.org

www.fcrr.org (Florida Center on Reading Research)

www.vocabulogic.com

(DIBELS, LETRS, TRE, and other PD and Curriculum Material)

www.all4ed.org (especially helpful for MS/HS)

www.RtInetwork.org (Important Resource for RtI)

www.scoe.org/reading (Sonoma Office of Education)